



Healing Through Self After Harm by Others: The Associations Between Self-Compassion, Trauma-Related Shame, and Physical Health

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Introduction

- Interpersonal trauma has been linked with both short-term and long-term health implications such as depression, chronic disease, substance use, and PTSD (see, e.g., Krug et al., 2002; Sumner et al., 2015).
- Current research also suggests that trauma-related shame may increase PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptoms (Cabrera et al., 2021).
- An association between self-compassion and some of the negative effects of interpersonal violence such as trauma-related shame has been demonstrated in recent research (Cabrera et al., 2021).
- Self-compassion can help diminish shame by focusing on self-soothing rather than self-criticism (Gilbert & Proctor, 2016).
- The current study will explore the associations between self-compassion, trauma-related shame, and physical health. We hypothesize that when controlling for trauma-related shame, self-compassion remains a predictor for physical health outcomes

Methods

Participants & Procedure

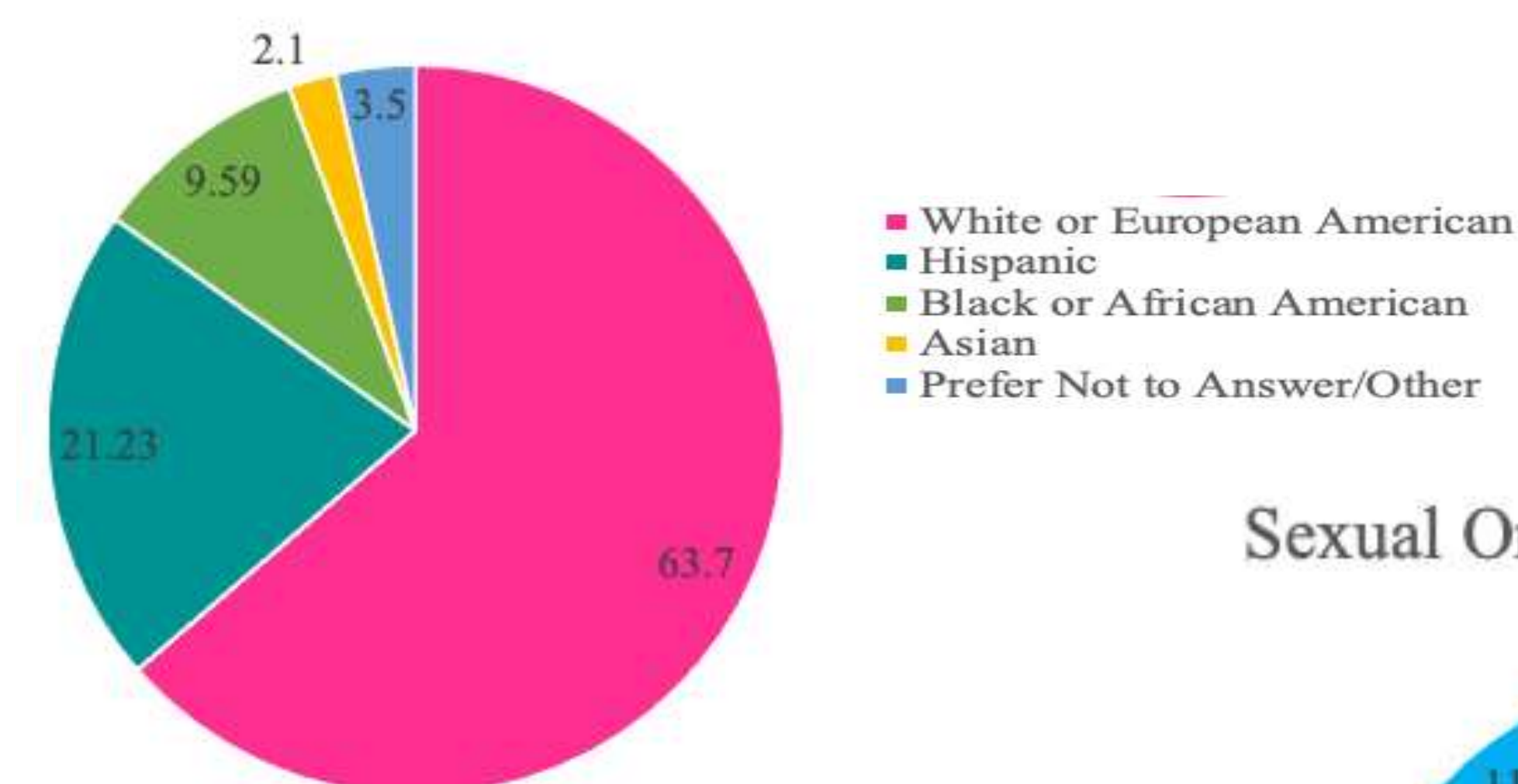
- Online survey administered to 146 participants through Qualtrics
- Participants recruited through social media as well as flyers hung around local college campuses and small businesses
- Incentivized participation with potential gift cards or class credit
- Institutional Review Board approval obtained
- Inclusion criteria: (1) older than 18 years of age and (2) have experienced some degree of interpersonal trauma.

Measures

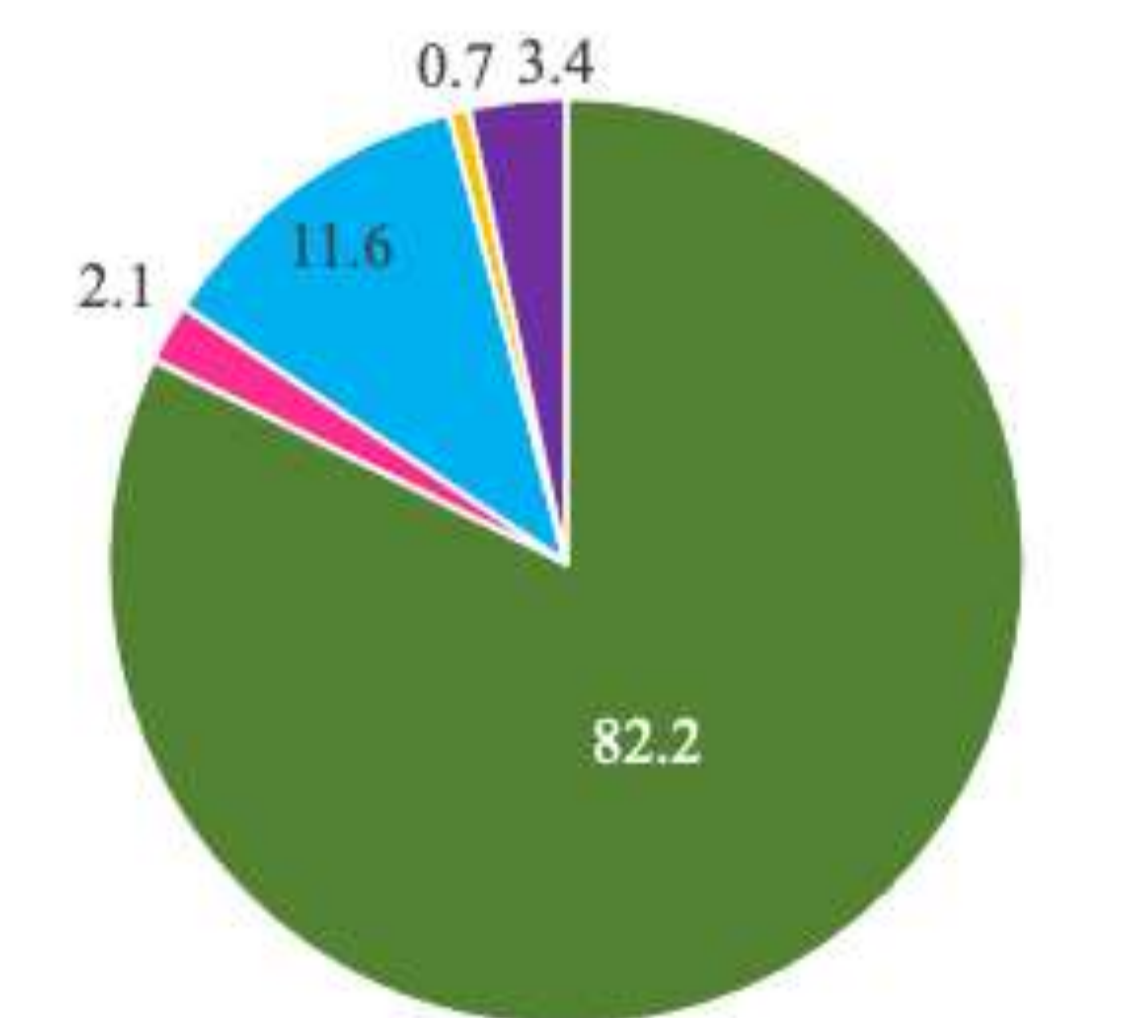
- The Trauma History Questionnaire (THQ; Hooper et al., 2011) will be used to assess whether participants have experienced interpersonal violence. If so, they will be asked to indicate frequency and severity of each experience.
- Self-compassion will be assessed using the 12-item Self-Compassion Scale – Short Form (SCS-SF, Raes et al., 2011). Each item will use a 5-point Likert scale where participants will select how often they perform the indicated behavior ranging from almost never (1) to almost always (5). Higher scores will indicate greater levels of self-compassion. The reliability of this scale was .569.
- The Trauma-Related Shame Inventory (TRSI; Økstedalen et al., 2014) is a 24-item self-report measure that assesses shame related to trauma. Participants will be asked to rate how true each statement is over the past week. Responses range from Not true of me (1) to Completely true of me (4). Higher scores will indicate greater levels of trauma-related shame. The reliability of this scale was .967.
- Physical health will be assessed using the 12-Item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-12; Ware Jr. et al., 1996). The SF-12 is a self-report measure that asks individuals to rate their health in a variety of categories. This assessment uses several scales. More negative items will be reverse-scored to create a composite score that represents total physical health. Higher scores will indicate greater levels of physical health. The reliability of this scale was .706.

Findings & Takeaways

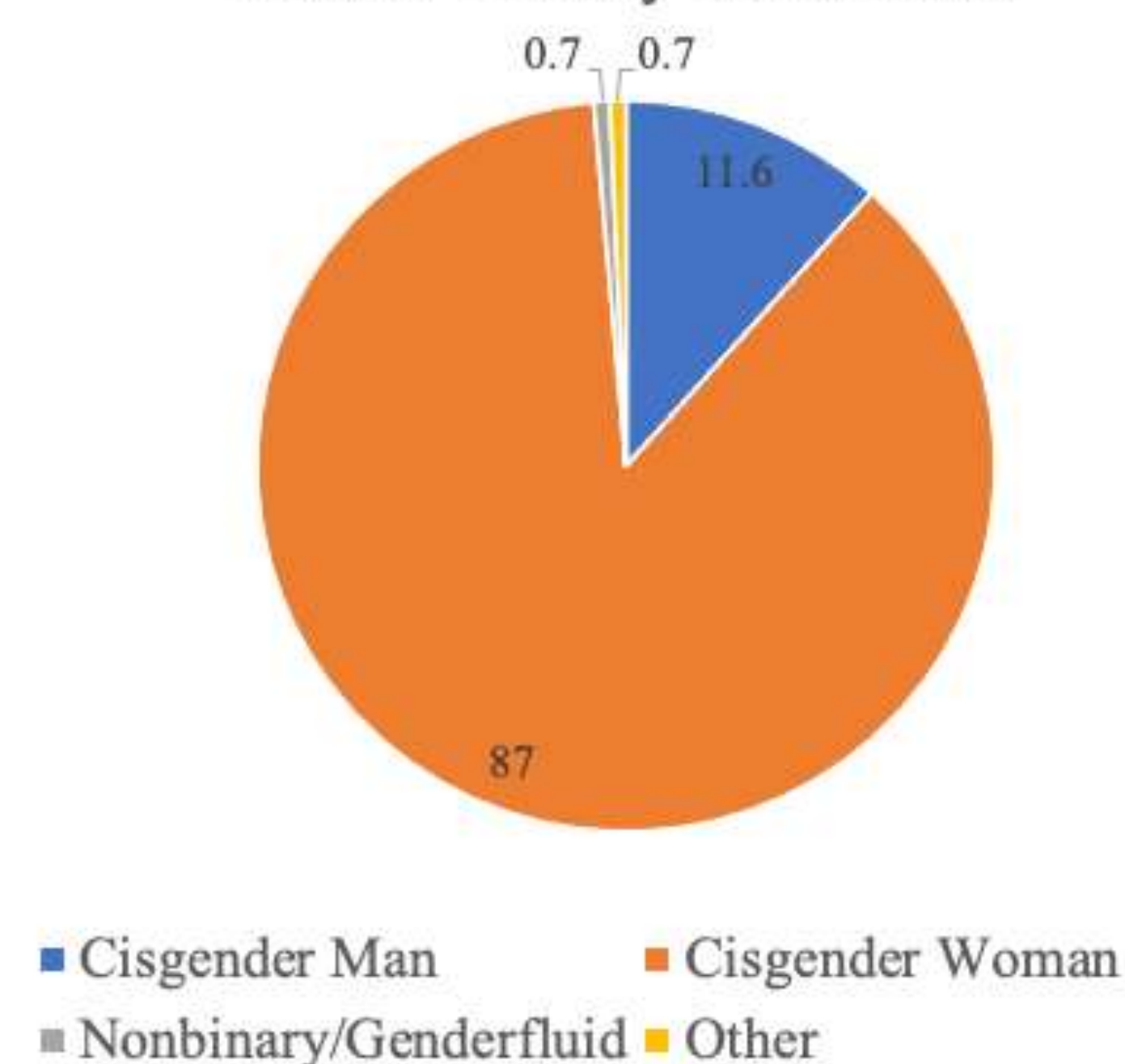
Racial Breakdown



Sexual Orientation Breakdown



Gender Identity Breakdown



Bivariate Correlations among Model Variables			
Variables	1	2	3
1. Self-Compassion	—		
2. Trauma Related Shame	.46**	—	
3. Physical Health	.07	-.21*	—
<i>M</i>	39.27	35.16	45.42
<i>SD</i>	5.36	14.78	6.68

Note. p<.05*; p<.01**

ANOVA					
	Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	<i>df</i>	Mean Square (MS)	<i>F</i>
1	Regression	5.69	1	5.69	6.14*
	Residual	119.65	129	.928	
	Total	125.34	130		
2	Regression	11.01	2	5.51	6.16**
	Residual	114.33	128	.89	
	Total	125.34	130		

Note. p<.05*; p<.01**

1. Predictor: Trauma-related shame
2. Predictor: Trauma-related shame and self-compassion

Key Findings

- Trauma-related shame is a predictor of physical health.
- Trauma-related shame is a predictor of physical health when controlling for self-compassion.
- Self-compassion is a predictor of physical health when controlling for trauma-related shame.

Limitations

- The study design was cross-sectional and therefore no causal conclusions can be made.
- The sample was predominantly White/European American (63.7%), cisgender (99%), and heterosexual (82%) college students.
- The reliability of the Self-Compassion Scale – Short Form was only .569.

Future Directions

- Replicate study with a more diverse pool of participants
- Explore whether the type of interpersonal violence that onsets trauma-related shame has an impact on these results
- Assess whether self-compassion can be used as an intervention for trauma-related shame

References

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